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ABSTRACT

A useful framework for literature-based instruction is the curriculum related literature unit which provides a total resource for content area teaching. Such a unit could be based on the science curriculum, "Exploring the Solar System," and could be developed thematically through topics of space or the solar system. The teacher's initial step is to create a collaborative graphic plan or organizer for a satellite display synthesizing the students' prior knowledge, reading text, literature, and curriculum goals. This organizer or mapping becomes the key to the selection of books and planning of literature activities. A unit can be organized to include science, math, social studies, and language arts content through development of research reports, time lines, distance calculations, creative writing, and drama and art projects. Class activities and suggested books demonstrate how, in the music classroom, music appreciation and skills are taught and learned in this unit design in concert with the arts of language and other curriculum areas. Whether the point of departure in developing a teaching unit at any level is a specific subject, book title, or current interest, webbing the unit themes within all areas of language and learning emerges as a whole language approach in instructional concert, interweaving impressive and expressive language within the context of literature. (Twenty-eight references are attached.) (RS)

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EXPLORING THE SOLAR SYSTEM: A LITERATURE UNIT WITHIN A WHOLE LANGUAGE CONTEXT

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The focus in the Whole Language classroom is on children's literature, correlating reading and writing activities, with literature in all its forms as the material of instruction, and relating information to the content area (Goodman, 1986). Language growth through immersion in literature supports the idea that language is acquired through use, not practice (Altwerger, 1987). Literature-based learning stems from exploration and discovery, opportunities for use of oral and written language, research and experimentation, and expressive and performing arts activities.

A useful framework for literature-based instruction is the curriculum related literature unit which provides a total resource for content area teaching. Such a unit could be a literature unit based on the science curriculum, "Exploring the Solar System," which may be developed thematically through topics of space or of the solar system. The teacher's initial step is to create a collaborative graphic plan or organizer for a satellite display synthesizing the students' prior knowledge, reading text, literature and curriculum goals. This organizer or mapping becomes the key to the selection of books and planning of literature activities.

In one instance, the classroom discussion can center on the launching of a satellite which is viewed on television. The teacher then launches the literature resources as the base of curriculum development. Sally Ride explains about traveling in space in *To Space and Back*. Alan Bean speaks of his experience in *Life as an Astronaut*. The story of Christa McAuliffe is told by Charlene Billings in *Pioneer Space Teacher*. Space shuttles are explained by Don Dwiggins in *Flying the Space Shuttles*. Seymour Simon adds to his titles with *Stars* and a book about star-watching, *Look to the Sky*. Roy Gallant explains the solar system in a book using *The Solar System* as its title. Simor adds the individual planet books of text and photographs, *Jupiter*, *Saturn*, and *Mars*. The Paul Westman biography *Neil Armstrong: Space Pioneer* highlights a reference to "the Eagle has landed," broadening the concept of space while creating symbolic allusion. The mysteries of outer space are posed by Franklyn Branley in *Is There*

Life in Outer Space? which invites the reading of science fiction as well as engaging in a variety of creative writing activities. The unit is organized to include science, math, social studies, and language arts content through development of research reports, time lines, distance calculations, related world developments, creative writing, real and authored interviews, and drama and art projects.

In the music classroom, the unit theme of "Exploring the Solar System" is developed with the music curriculum strand. The subjects of stars, moon and night surface as they are integrated with the musical knowledge of pitch and discrimination of mood and style. Students can learn the letter names to identify pitch with" Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," then play instruments to learn words and rhythm, and finally read and sing parts of lyrical verse. Books suggested for the music unit are Branley's *A Book of Stars for You*, *Enchantress from the Stars*, and *The Sky is Full of Stars*. Additional books include *Goodnight, Goodnight* by Eve Rice, Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight Moon* and *Lost Star, Meg on the Moon* by Helen Nicoll, and *Moon Tiger* by Phyllis Root. The books with music and lyrics for reading and reflecting mood and setting in discriminating musical accompaniment, include *Lullaby Songbook*, edited by Jane Yolen, *Lullabies and Night Songs* by Wilder, with illustrations by Maurice Sendak, *Once a Lullaby*, illustrated by Anital Lobel, and *A Week of Lullabies*, by Helen Plotz. Isaac Aismov's *Stars* and Nancy Larrick's *When the Dark Comes Dancing* are recommended for students' creative musical activities as well as for their ability to relate to other subject areas. Creative writing while listening, expository writing about the music, and/or journal entries enrich the unit. Music can further to be selected or composed to accompany the reading of poetry or the dramatic performance of selected scenes from favorite readings.

These specific purposes of the music teacher link him or her to the Whole Language classroom science study of astronomy, in creating mobiles of planets in the solar system, preparing travel posters to the planets, developing math concepts of distance calculations, extending language growth appreciation of poetic qualities through creative writing, distinguishing between expository writing in research reports and narrative writing in journals, incorporating facts about the solar system, using imagery effectively in reading and writing and interpreting language growth through oral reading and creative movement. Music appreciation and skills are taught and learned in this unit design in concert with the arts of language and other curriculum areas.

Whether the point of departure in developing a teaching unit at any level is a specific subject, book title or current interest, webbbing the unit themes within all areas of language and learning emerges as a Whole Language approach in instructional concert, interweaving impressive and expressive langauge within the context of literature.

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